

We believe the denial of voting rights to felons was based in racism, and has no justification. Oregonian citizens on Probation or Parole (Post-prison supervision) completing criminal sentences now automatically regain their right to register to vote. Why should they not also vote while incarcerated? Incarceration itself is the punishment; voting rights should have no relationship to incarceration.

Incarcerated people may be physically removed from society, but they're going to return to it. Keeping positive contacts with society helps re-entry—family support, education, job skills, interest in what's going on in the community. Let's include voting. Incarcerated people don't lose their right to due process, food, shelter, safety, medical care, mail, books, and other things. Why should they lose their right to vote?

In Maine and Vermont people in prison never lost their right to vote. Oregon should join them. It will be easy to provide voting rights here, since we have universal vote-by-mail. Registration address would be the last place the person lived, and then they would receive their ballot at their prison and just send it in.

Oregon could be the first State to reverse this misguided policy, which disproportionately affects Black, Latinx and Indigenous people. Let's add voting to the list of what prepares Oregon's incarcerated population for successful re-entry. Oregon can be a leader again in smart policy.